



Survey

2018

A snapshot of our profession

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Introduction

What's it like to be a copywriter in 2018?

That's what we're trying to answer with this survey. More than 400 copywriters took time out of their busy schedules to tell us about their work, their earnings and their outlook for the future. The results of this survey, when compared to our previous two annual surveys, paint a broadly consistent picture of our profession.

Generally, the outlook is great. Copywriters love their work. Copywriters are charging more, for work they find rewarding. Very few people want to leave the profession. We're feeling optimistic about the year ahead, after a successful 2017.

However, our results suggest that, in terms of rates, there are two tiers of professional copywriters. While most copywriters are charging fair rates, broadly in line with the average, there is a significant minority of copywriters charging less – sometimes much less.

Why do some copywriters undercharge? There probably isn't a simple answer to this question. Copywriters may be influenced by their current clients, experience or confidence.

But whatever the circumstances, we believe that all copywriters have the right to charge a fair rate for their work. After all, we know the immense value that copywriters offer. We turn browsers into buyers. We communicate complex messages. We help organisations define their propositions and sell their products. Our work has the power to boost profits, build brands and raise awareness.

Perhaps the hardest thing for a copywriter to sell is themselves.

Leif Kendall

Director, ProCopywriters

Key findings



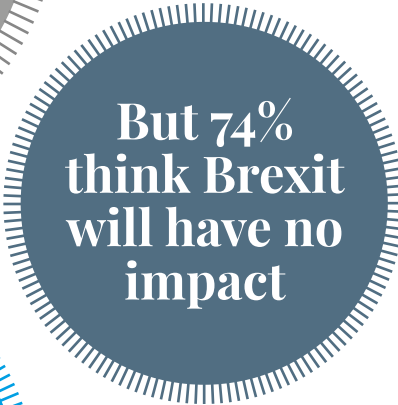
The average day rate is £342



The gender pay gap has fallen to 25% across all employment types



Only 4% think Brexit will have a positive impact on their career



But 74% think Brexit will have no impact



Just 2% of copywriters want to change careers

Respondents

Number

Again, we've had a fall in the number of respondents, which may indicate a degree of survey fatigue. We may take a break in 2019 – or look for new ways to reach more copywriters.

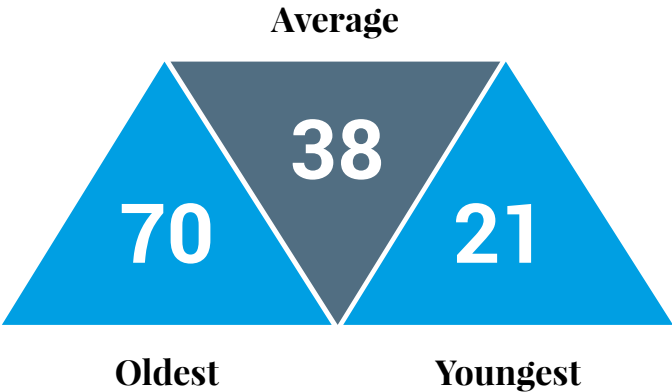


2017



2016

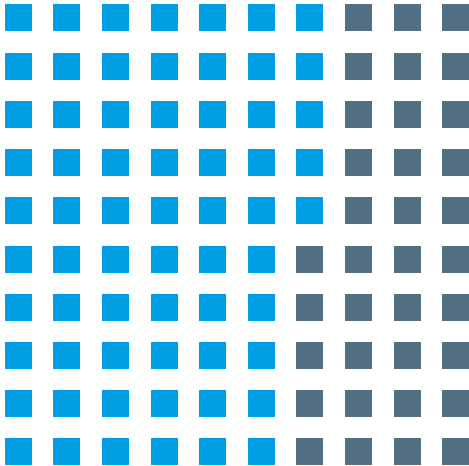
Age



	2017	2016
Oldest	75yrs	75yrs
Average	41yrs	40yrs
Youngest	20yrs	19yrs

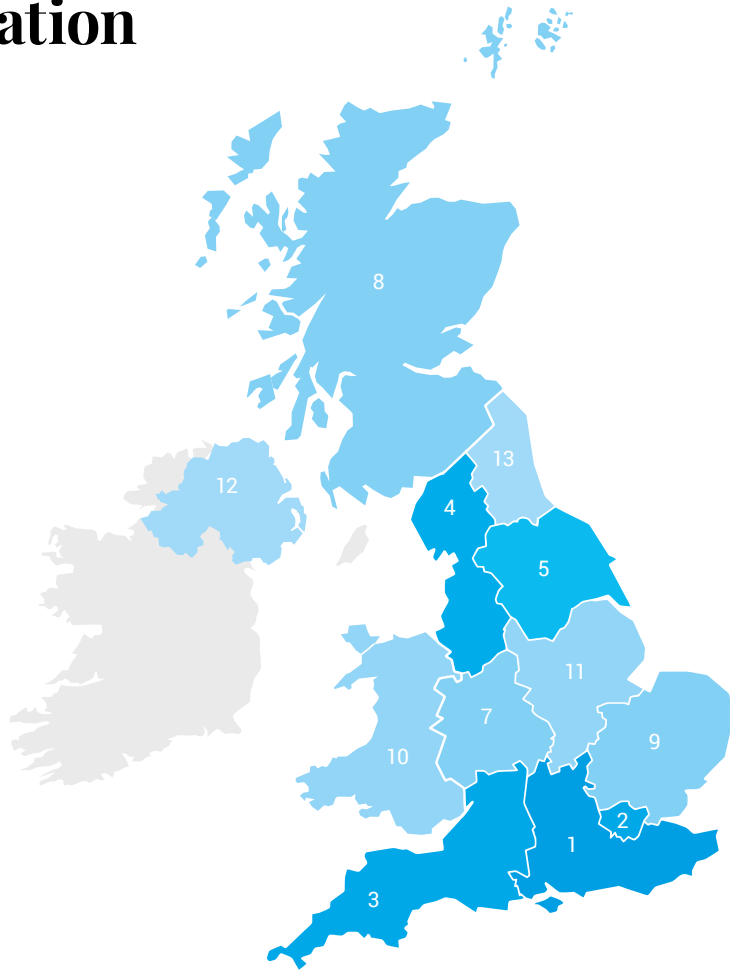
Gender

Our gender bias has grown since last year. Significantly more women complete our survey than men.



		2017	2016
Female	65%	58%	56%
Male	35%	41%	44%

Location



		2017	2016
1. South East	19%	18%	20%
2. London	14%	18%	21%
3. South West	14%	11%	14%
4. North West	11%	9%	9%
5. Yorkshire & Humber	9%	6%	5%
6. International	7%	9%	5%
7. West Midlands	6%	5%	5.5%
8. Scotland	5%	5%	3%
9. East Anglia	5%	9%	7%
10. Wales	4%	3%	2.5%
11. East Midlands	3%	4%	6.5%
12. N. Ireland	1%	0%	0.5%
13. North East	0%	1%	1%

Working hours

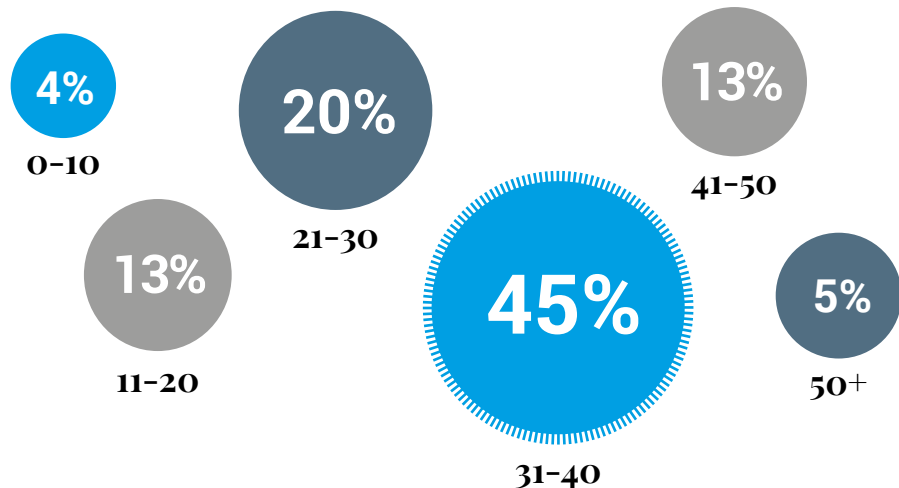
Full time



Part time

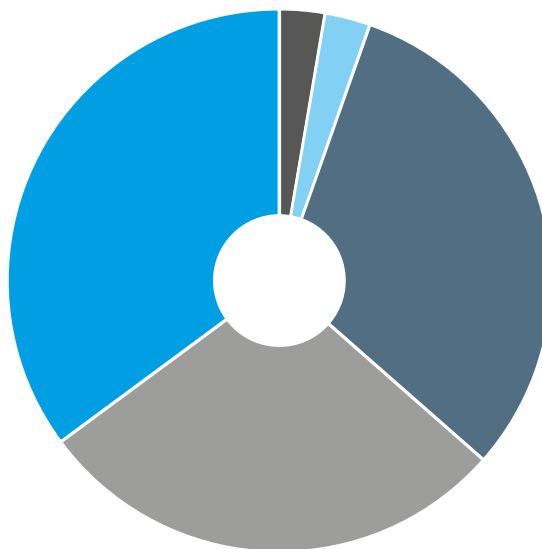
	2017	2016
Full time	71%	73%
Part time	29%	27%

Hours worked per week



Other responsibilities

For the first time, we asked respondents about the rest of their lives. We wanted to understand how people divide their time, and whether there is any correlation between other responsibilities and earnings.



- 26% Side projects
- 23% Childcare
- 21% Other work
- 2% Charity work
- 2% Caring for a friend or family member

Level of experience



Total years' experience combined



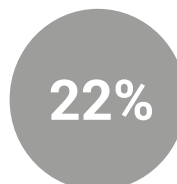
Average

	2017	2016
Total combined	5938yrs	6452yrs
Average	11yrs	10.5yrs

Years of experience



0-5



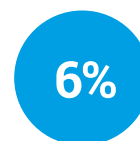
11-20



31-40



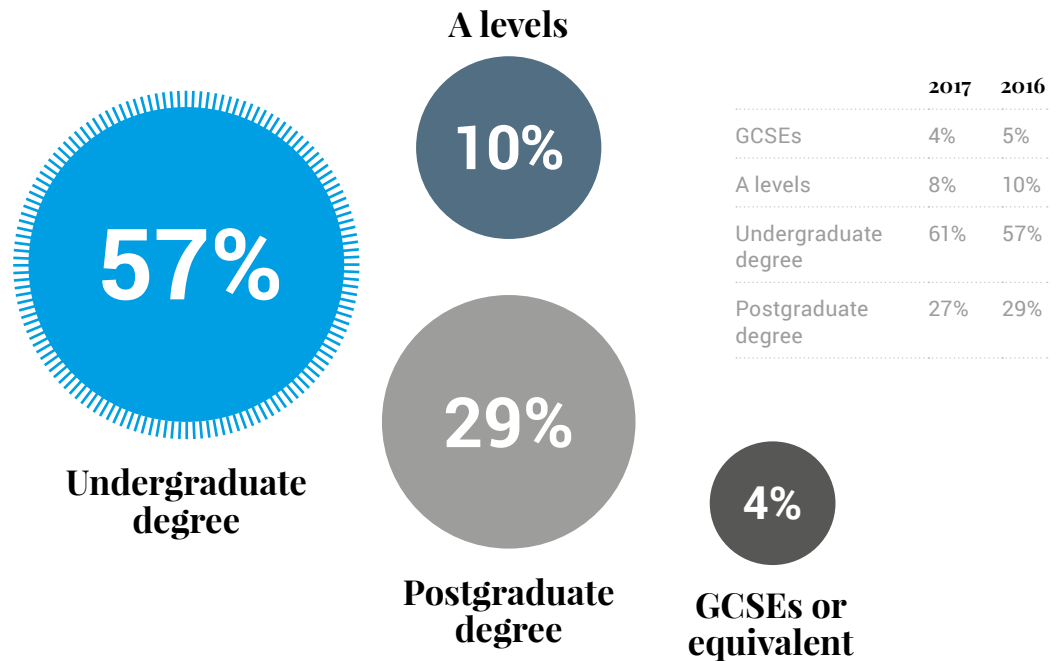
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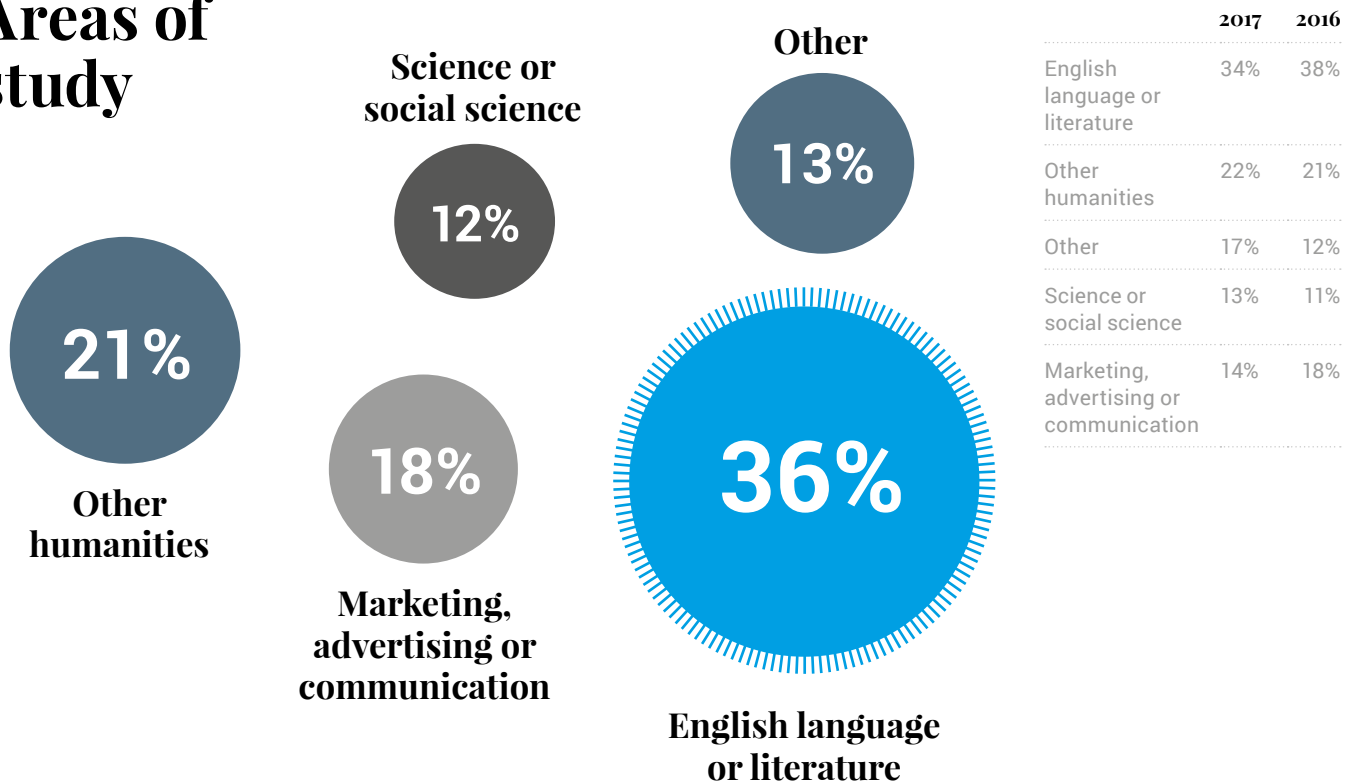
21-30

Education and training

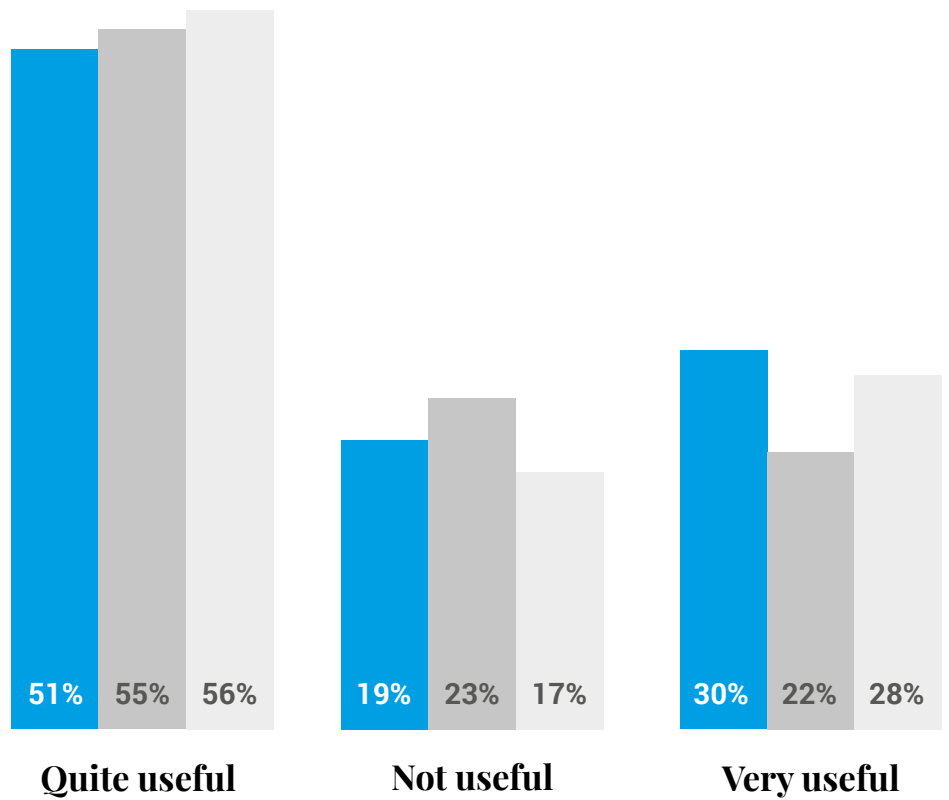
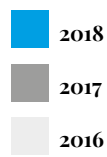
Highest education level attained



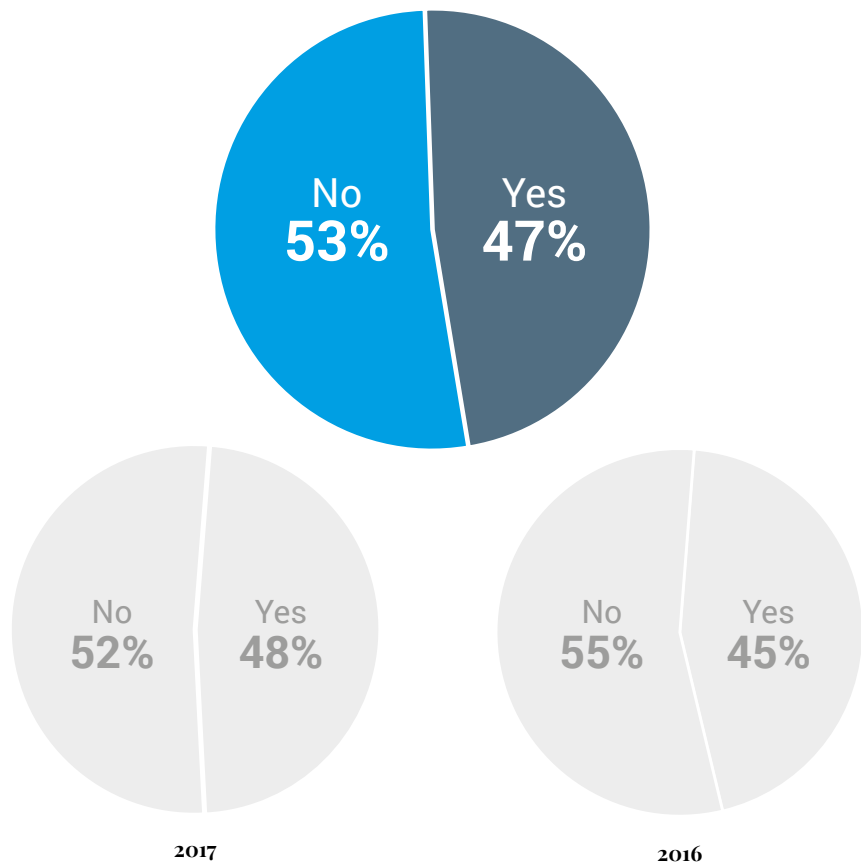
Areas of study



How useful do you feel your degree has been for your copywriting career?



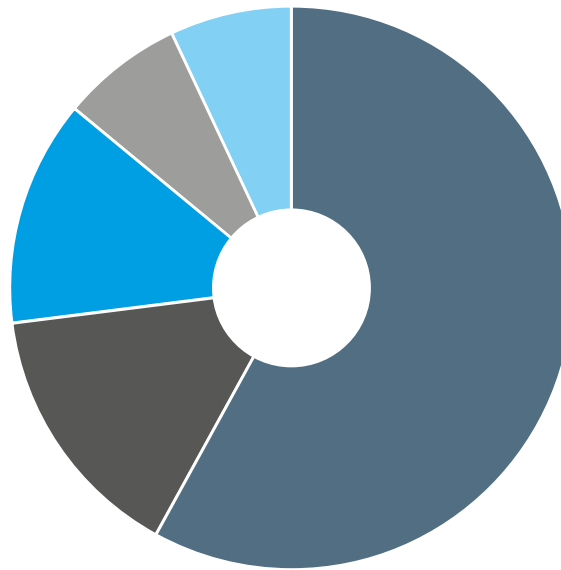
Have you completed any copywriting training?



How copywriters work

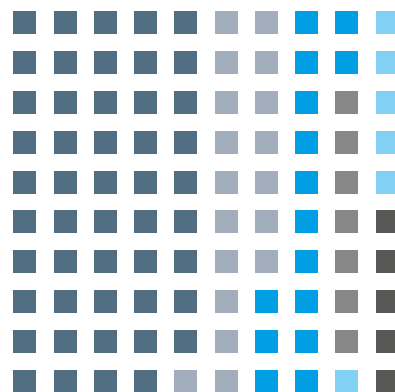
Employment model

As an organisation that currently represents mostly freelancers, it's not surprising that the majority of our respondents are independent professionals.



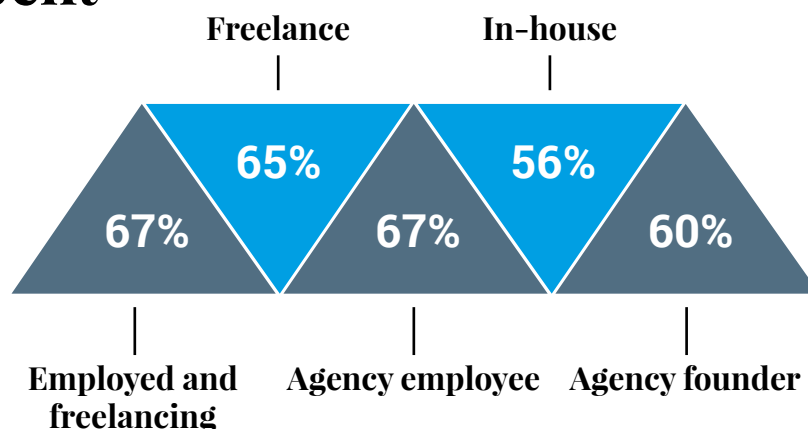
	2017	2016
Freelance	68%	66%
Agency-side	11%	14%
Client-side	9%	8%
Agency founder	6%	7%
Employed/freelance	6%	6%

Disciplines and specialisms



	2017	2016
No specialism	49%	54%
Digital & SEO	18%	15%
Marketing materials	15%	15%
Advertising	7%	6%
Technical	6%	6%
PR & journalism	5%	4%

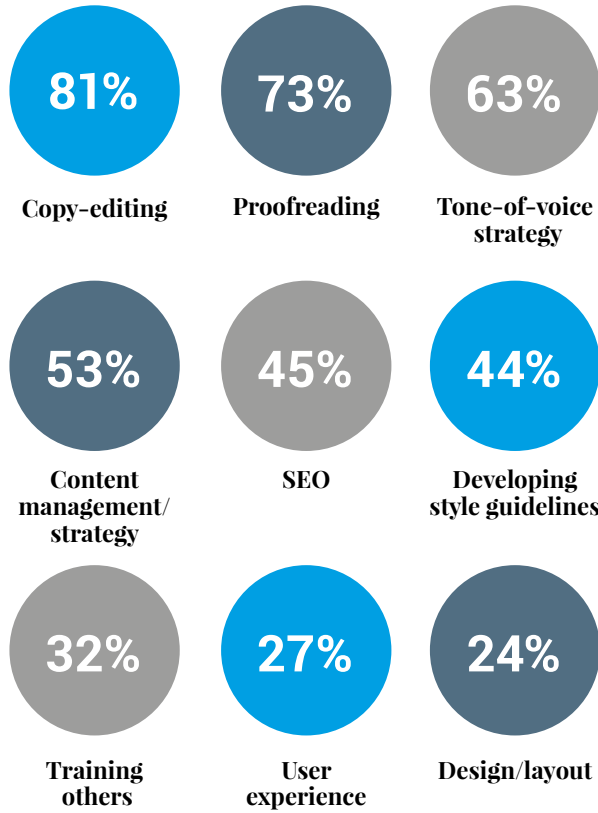
Time spent writing



	2017	2016
Employed and freelancing	67%	n/a
Freelance	66%	64%
Agency employee	63%	62%
In-house	61%	60%
Agency founder	55%	56%

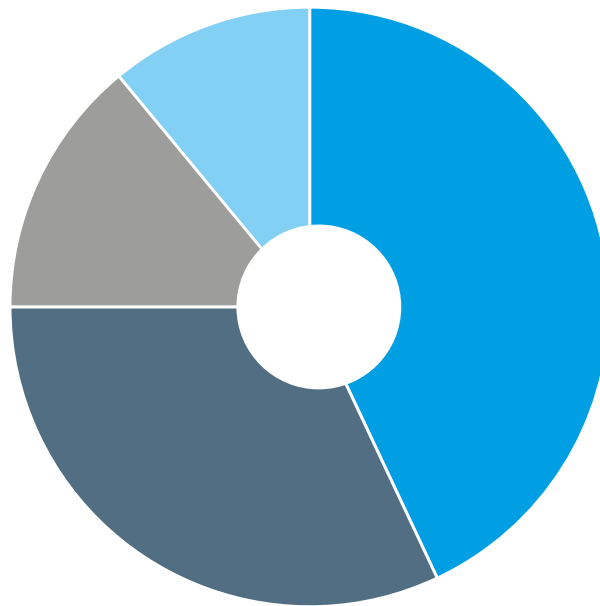
Other tasks and roles

What other skills and services do copywriters offer?



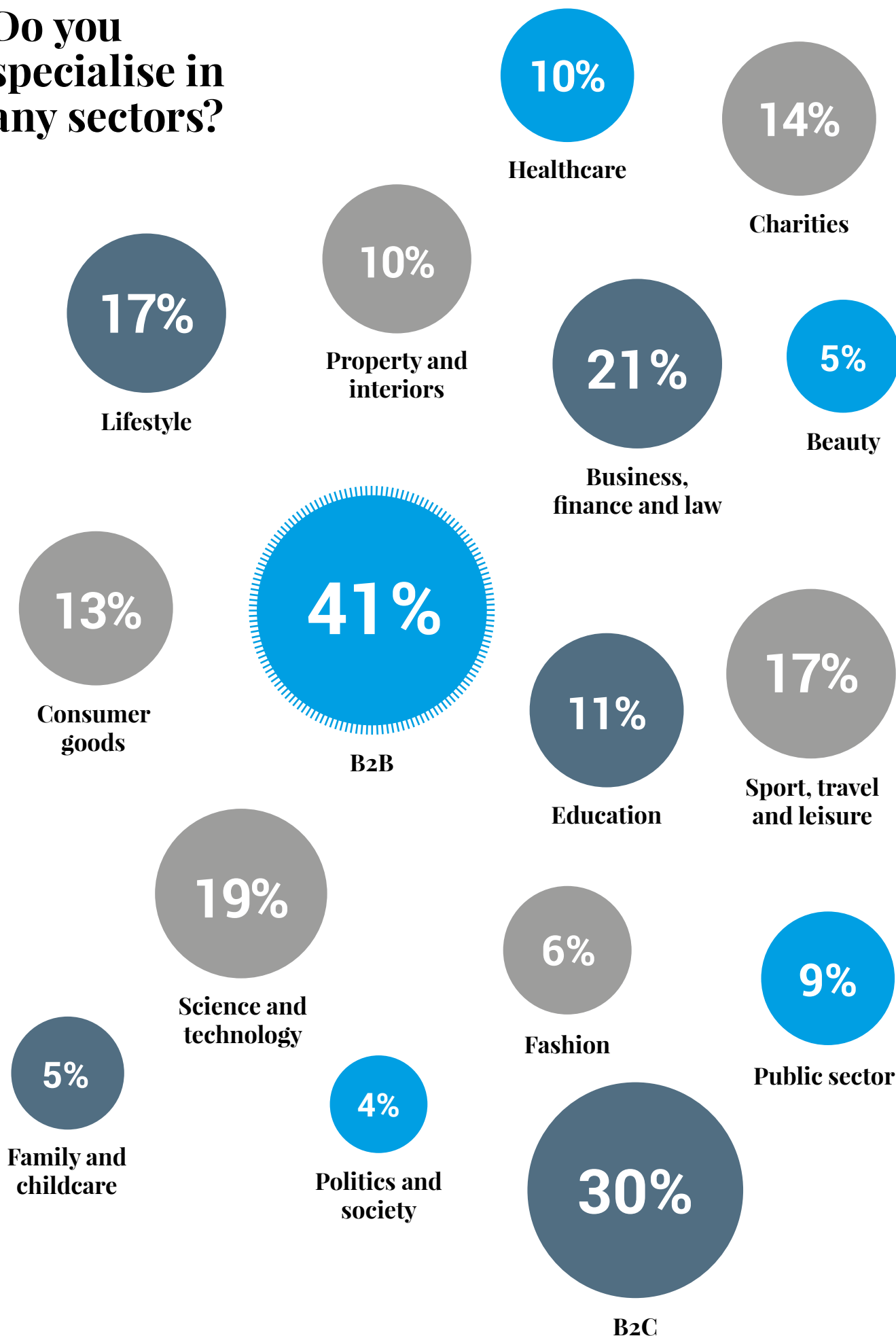
	2017	2016
Tone-of-voice strategy	60%	60%
Copy-editing	80%	38%
Training others	29%	24%
Design/layout	24%	21%
SEO	49%	18%
Developing style guidelines	45%	12%
Content management /strategy	51%	12%
User experience	23%	12%
Proofreading	69%	11%

Have you ever done pro bono (unpaid) work for a charity?



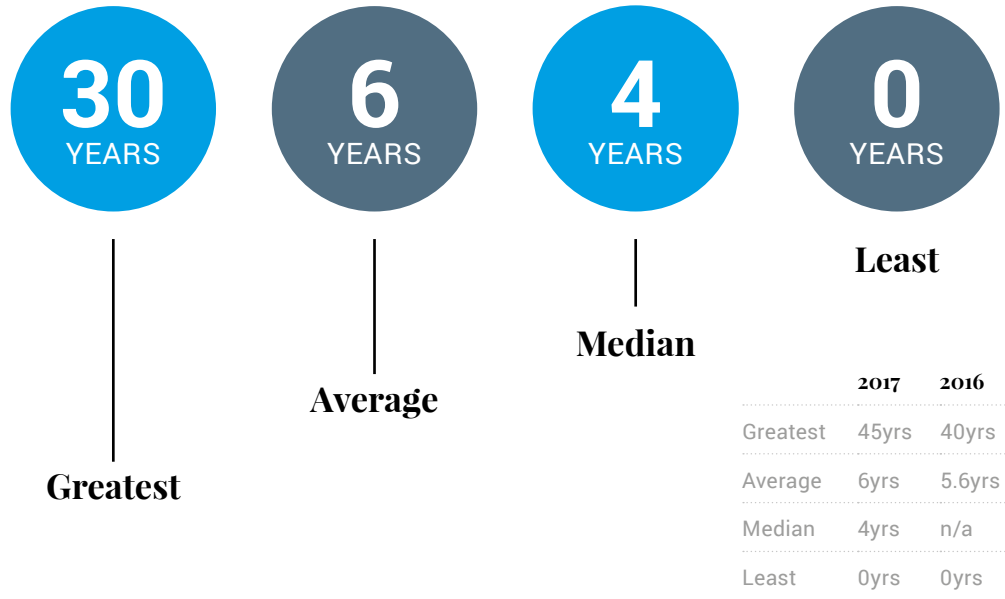
	2017
No, but I am open to it	31%
Yes, I do this occasionally	23%
I have in the past but don't do this any more	9%
No, and I wouldn't	8%
Yes, I do this regularly	7%

Do you specialise in any sectors?

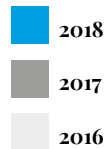


Freelance copywriters

Experience before going freelance



Finding new clients



Word of mouth



Website



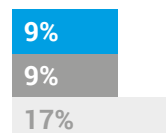
Social media



Networking events/conference

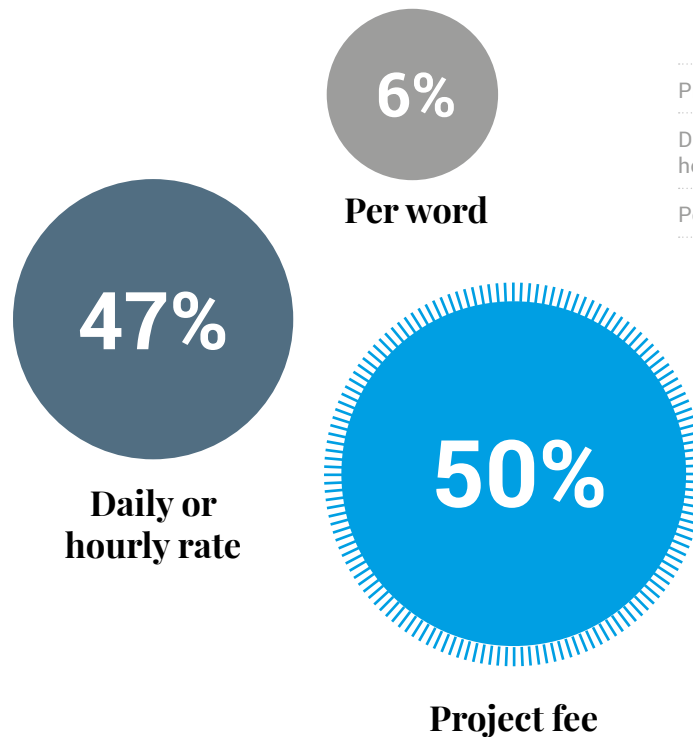


Advertising



Freelance rates

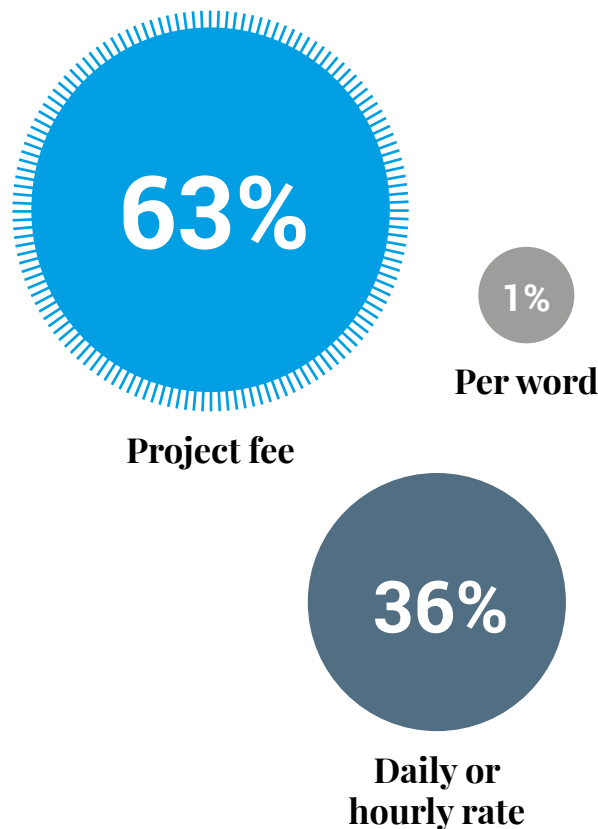
How freelancers charge



	2017	2016
Project fee	72%	70%
Daily or hourly rate	68%	71%
Per word	7%	9%

Preferred charging model

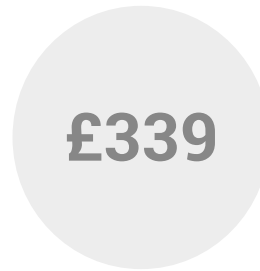
Once again, charging per word is the least popular charging model. Only two respondents would choose to use this approach.



	2017	2016
Project fee	58%	55%
Daily or hourly rate	41%	43%
Per word	1%	2%

Average day rates

As last year, the average day rate across all regions has risen slightly – up £3 to £342. Our international respondents have the highest average rate at £496, though the small number of respondents means this may not reflect the majority of copywriters working overseas.

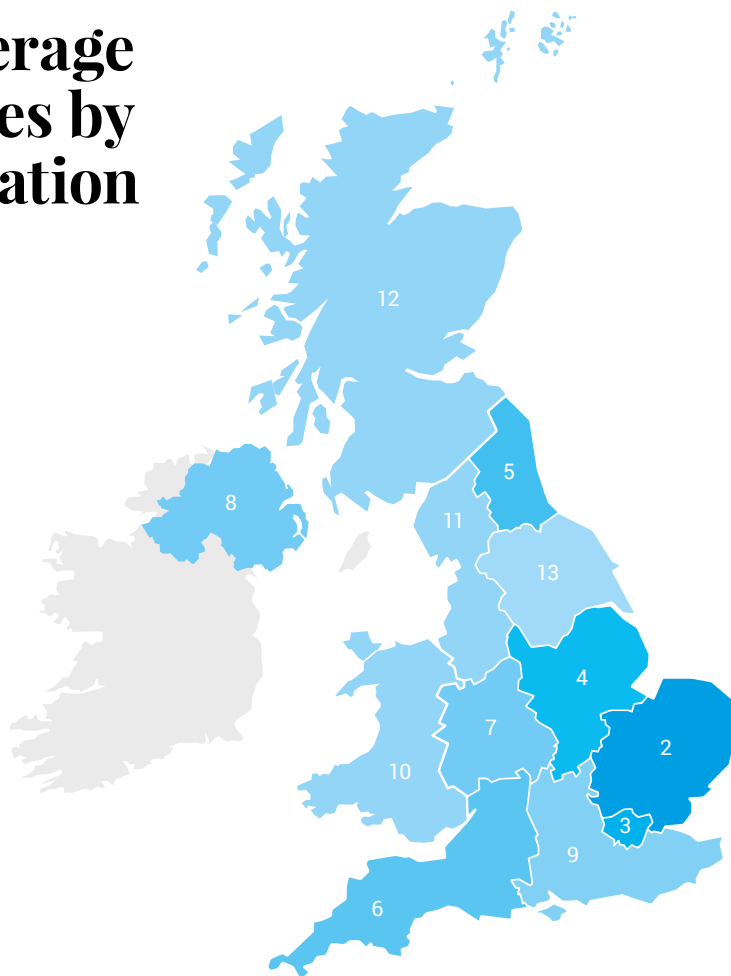


2017



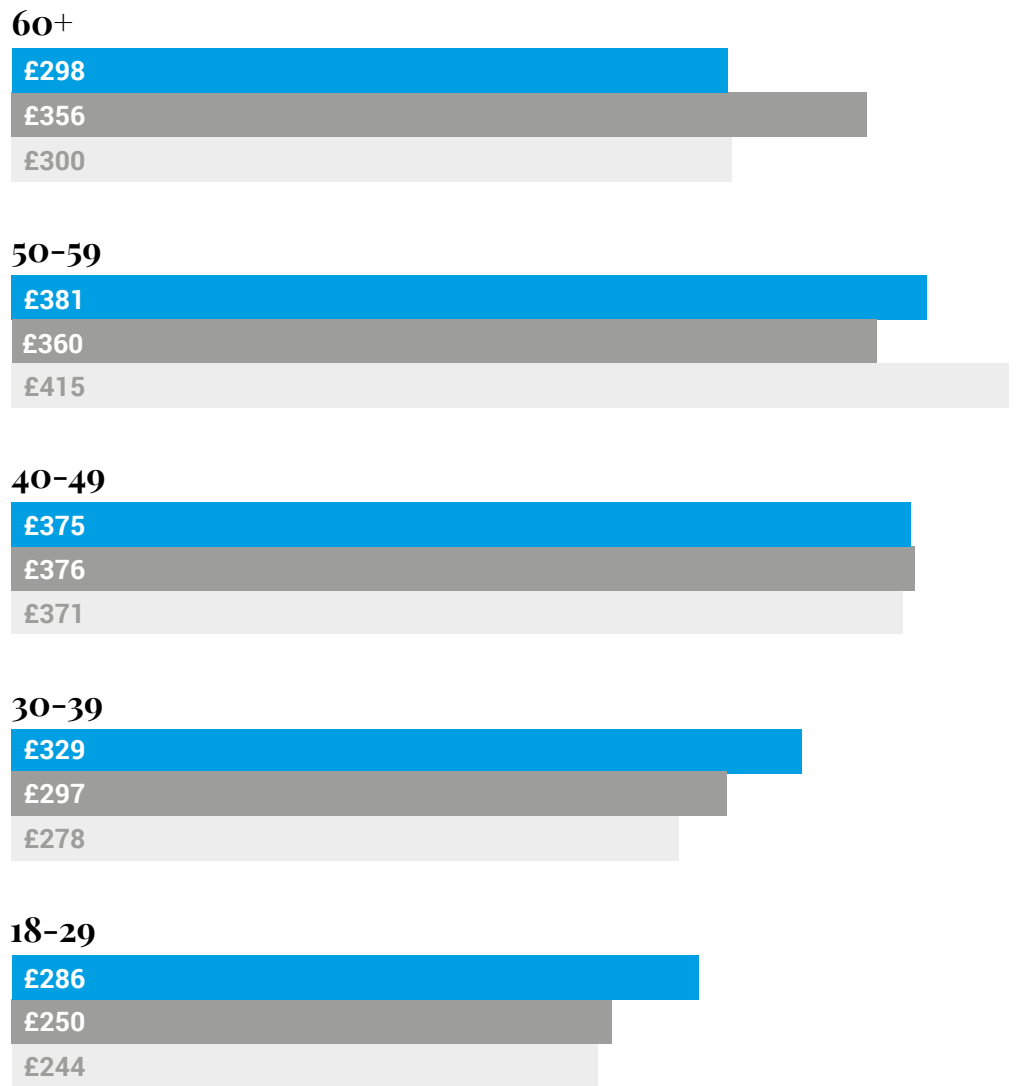
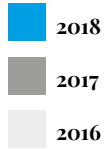
2016

Average rates by location



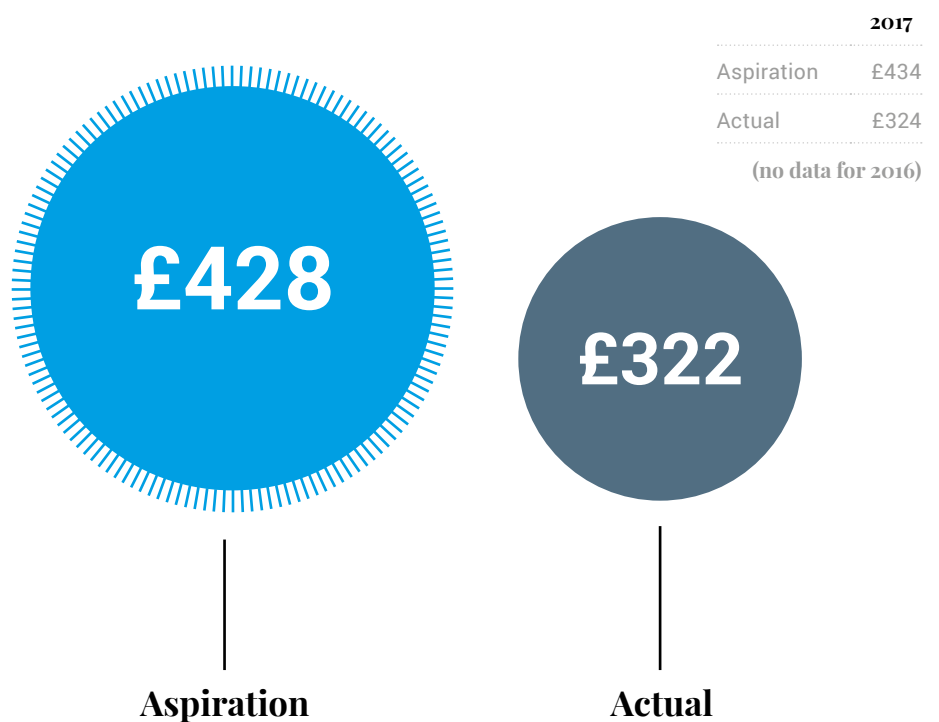
		2017	2016
1. International	£496	£433	£344
2. East Anglia	£419	£357	£336
3. London	£405	£392	£426
4. East Midlands	£385	£281	£288
5. North East	£343	£350	n/a
6. South West	£336	£316	£301
7. West Midlands	£326	£286	£283
8. Northern Ireland	£323	£236	n/a
9. South East	£317	£350	£362
10. Wales	£297	£400	£279
11. North West	£297	£277	£311
12. Scotland	£284	£262	£254
13. Yorkshire & Humber	£249	£269	£252

Average rates and age



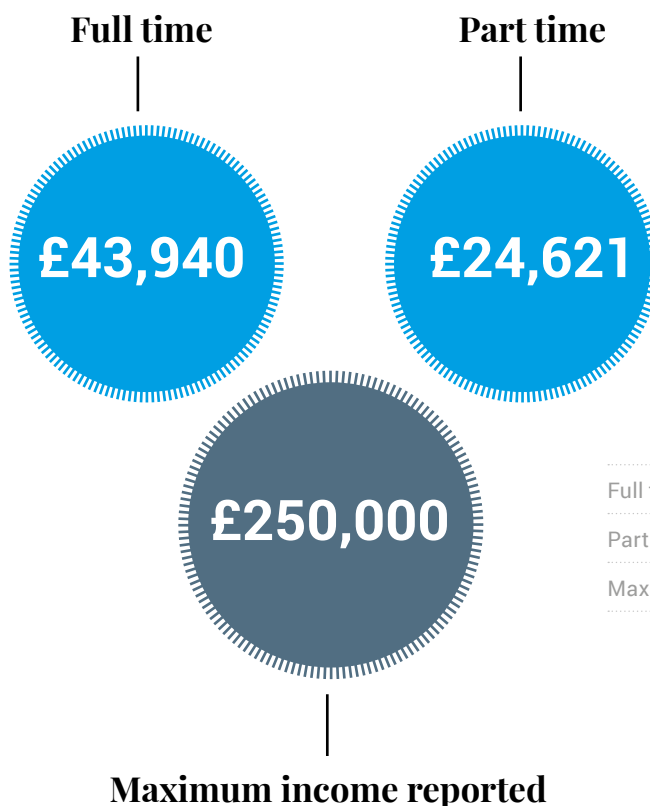
Rate aspirations

We asked copywriters how much they *want* to charge. The difference, on average, represents a 33% increase.



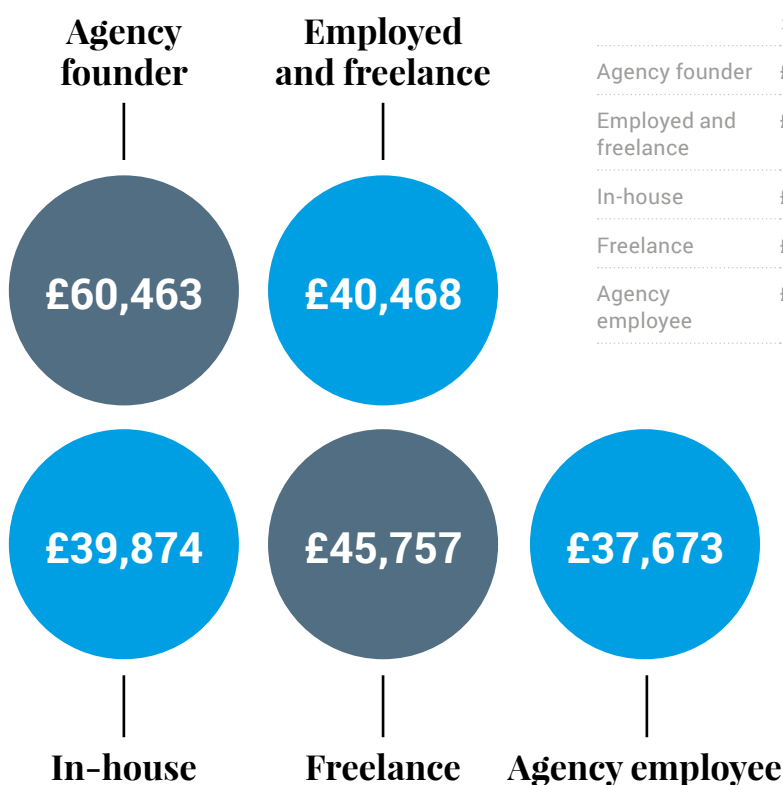
Earnings

Average earnings across all employment types



	2017	2016
Full time	£41,666	£39,850
Part time	£26,522	n/a
Maximum	£285,000	n/a

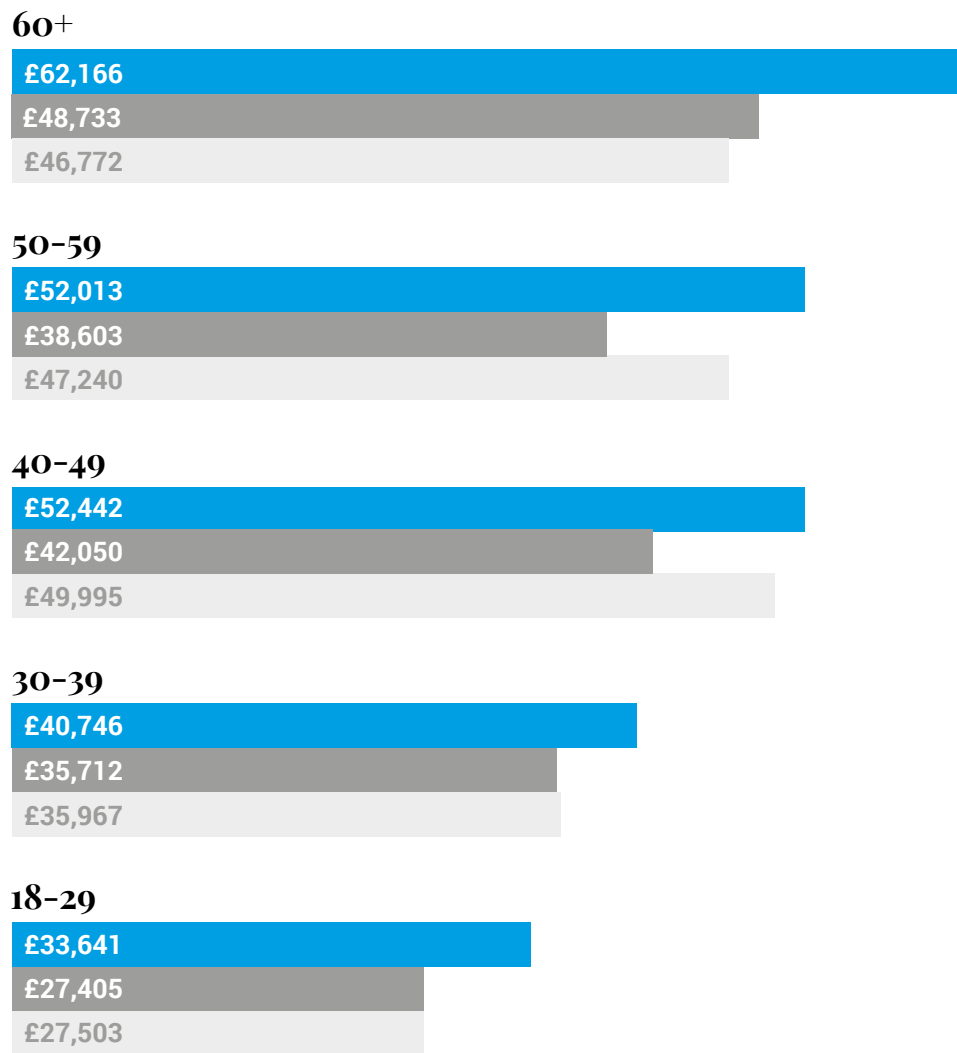
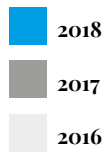
Income by employment type (full time only)



	2017	2016
Agency founder	£50,465	£57,621
Employed and freelance	£47,664	n/a
In-house	£38,369	£31,481
Freelance	£36,012	£39,883
Agency employee	£34,329	£37,300

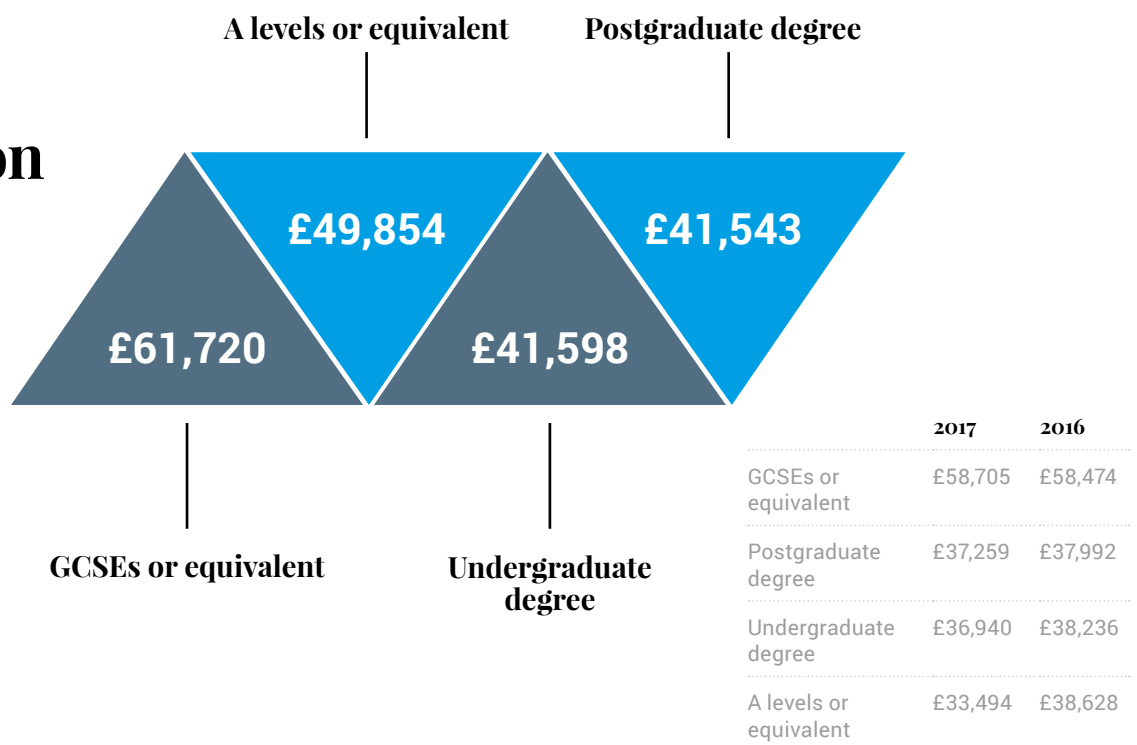
Income and age

(full time only)

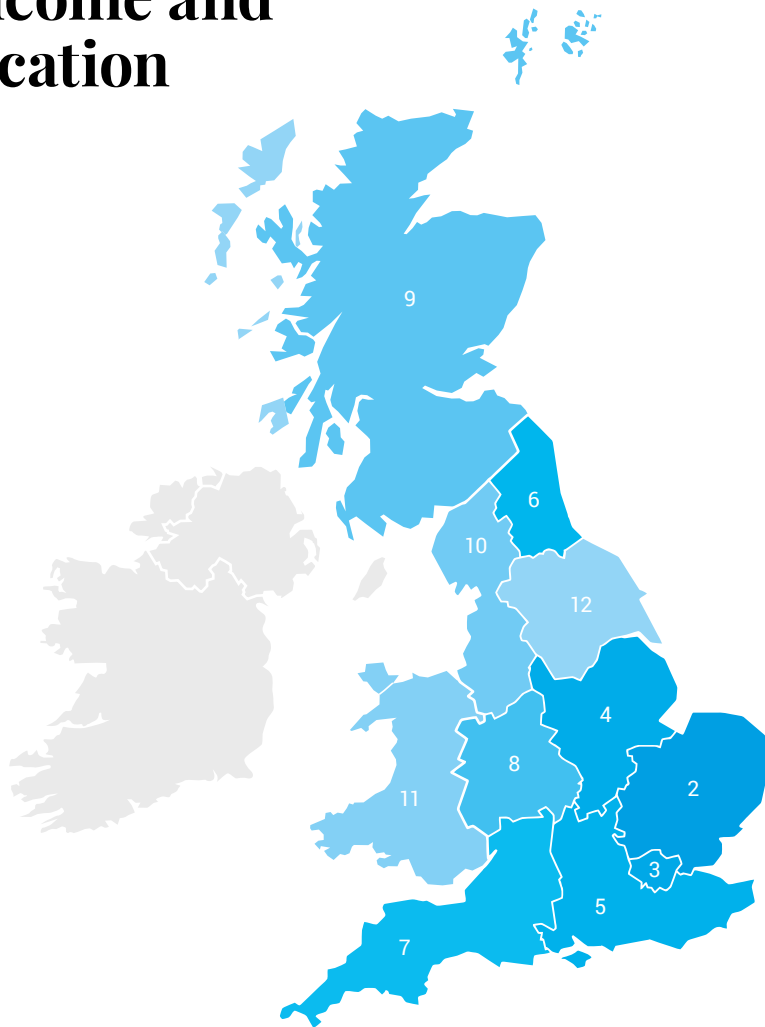


Income and education

(full time only)



Income and location

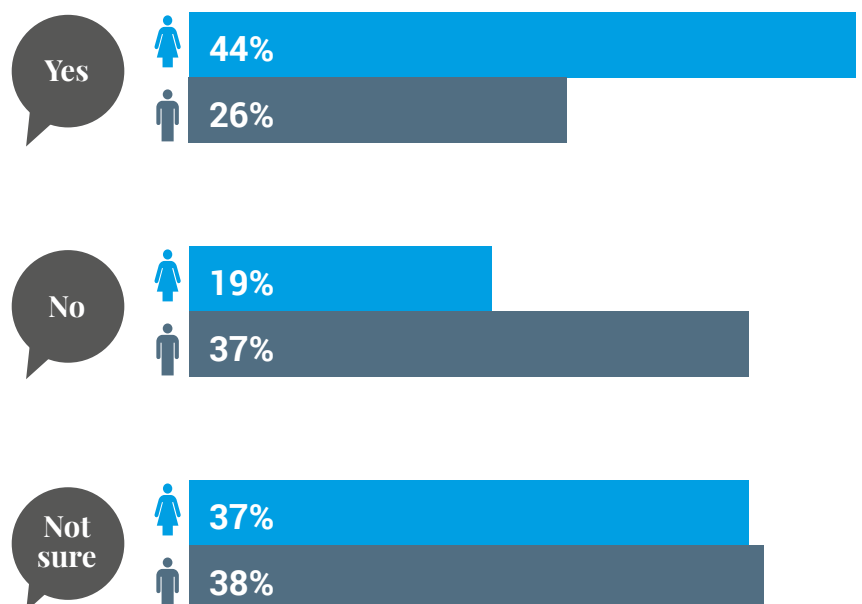


		2017	2016
1. International	£62,919	£43,309	£30,824
2. East Anglia	£60,416	£44,081	£47,478
3. London	£52,904	£55,340	£49,298
4. East Midlands	£45,250	£28,950	£27,818
5. South East	£42,906	£38,602	£40,507
6. North East	£40,750	£20,019	n/a
7. South West	£38,887	£30,456	£33,996
8. West Midlands	£37,691	£28,740	£29,938
9. Scotland	£36,333	£25,754	£25,045
10. North West	£32,396	£30,449	£28,214
11. Wales	£31,375	£32,656	£32,200
12. Yorkshire & Humber	£28,769	£23,793	£35,462
Northern Ireland	n/a	£20,000	n/a

Perceptions: Does gender have an impact on pay?

2017	Yes	No	Not sure
Women	31%	28%	41%
Men	16%	42%	42%

2016	Yes	No	Not sure
Women	29%	32%	39%
Men	9%	52%	39%



Income and gender

Men earn 25% more than women – at least among the 420 copywriters who completed our survey.

This shocking statistic only includes full-time workers – so we can't blame the difference on working hours.

This year we asked people about their other responsibilities (childcare, other job, etc) to see if this has any impact on pay. The table below suggests that your pay doesn't suffer if you do other work – unless that work is caring.

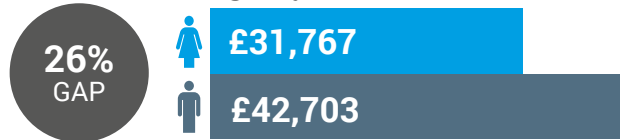
26% of our female respondents listed 'childcare' as one of their responsibilities, compared to 15% of men.

	2017	2016
Employed and freelance	46%	n/a
Agency employee	37%	33%
Freelance	28%	22%
Agency founder	18%	n/a
In-house	17%	9%

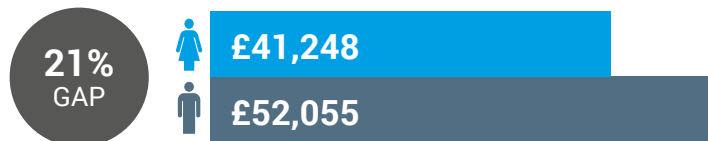
Employed and freelance



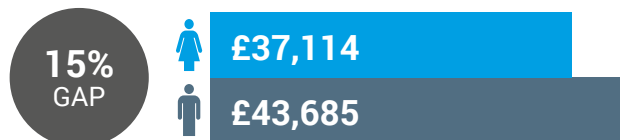
Agency



Freelance



In-house

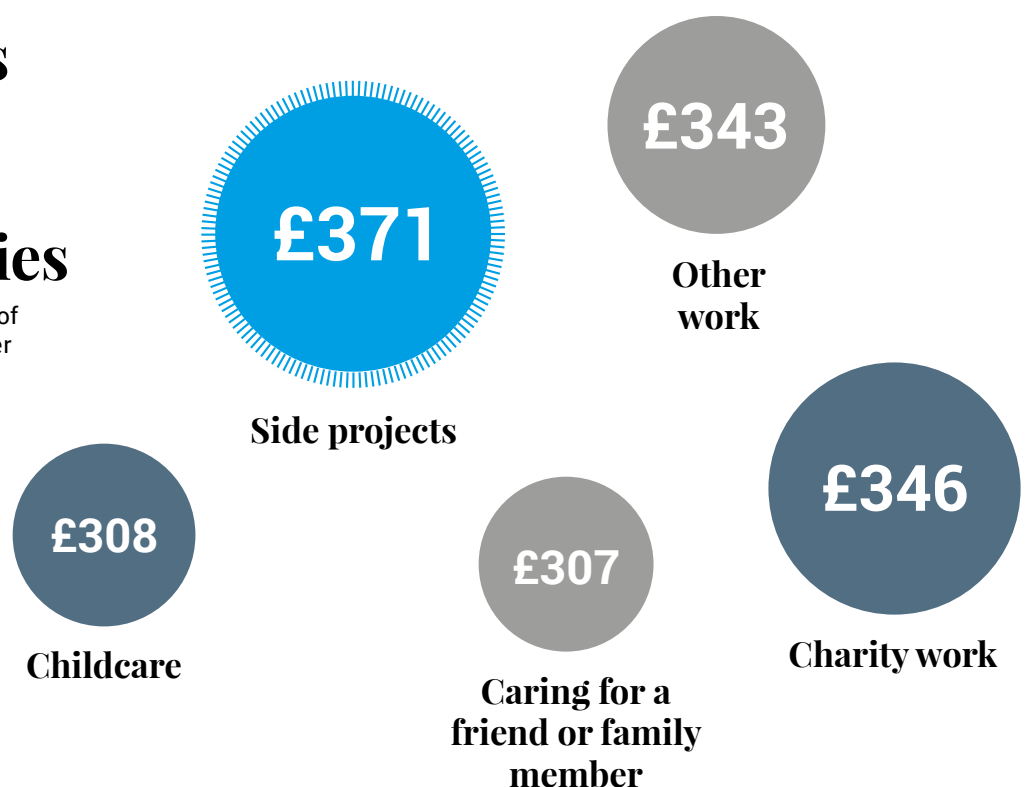


Agency founder



Average rates compared to other responsibilities

We calculated the average rates of those copywriters who have other responsibilities.



Outlook

Are copywriters thriving in 2018? Is now a good time to be a commercial writer?

In purely financial terms, how was 2017?

2017 was a good year

51%

2017 was a difficult year

15%

Not sure

12%

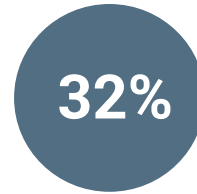
2017 was a typical year

22%

In terms of your career, are you optimistic about 2018?



Yes, I feel optimistic about 2018



I'm unsure about what 2018 will bring

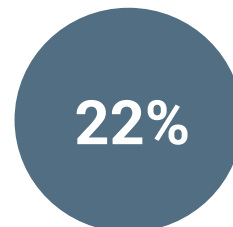


No - I feel pessimistic about 2018

What kind of impact do you think Brexit will have on your career?



Neutral - I'm not sure if Brexit will affect my work as a copywriter



Negative - I think Brexit may harm my career or my business

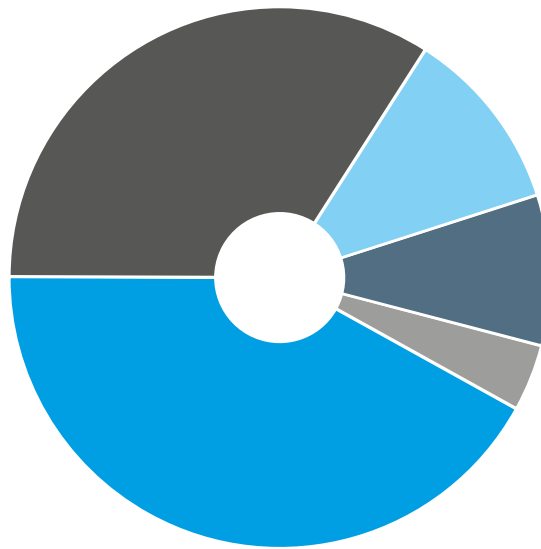


Positive - I believe Brexit will have a positive impact on my career

Motivation and aspirations

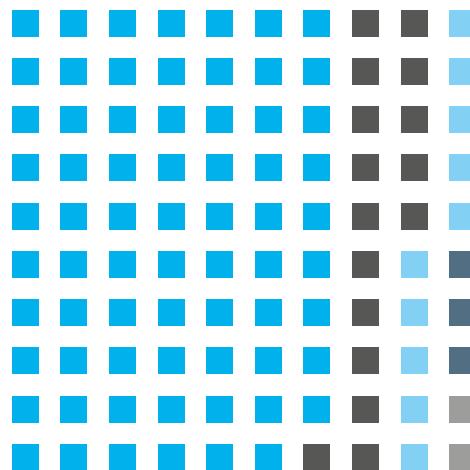
What do you enjoy most about being a copywriter?

	2017	2016
Being paid to write	39%	36%
Being creative	28%	20%
Getting results for the client	12%	12%
Something else	11%	4%
Being persuasive	3%	28%



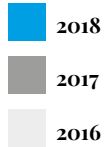
- 42%** Being paid to write
- 34%** Being creative
- 11%** Getting results for the client
- 9%** Something else
- 4%** Being persuasive

What type of recognition do you most value?



	2017	2016
Employer/client feedback	69%	68%
Financial	16%	16%
Peer recognition	10%	6%
Something else	3%	2%
Industry awards	2%	1%

How would you like your career to develop over the next two years?



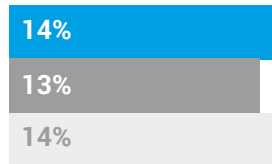
Earn more money



Do more creative writing



Do more strategic/consultancy work



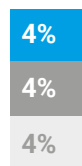
Something else



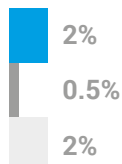
Go freelance



Start my own agency

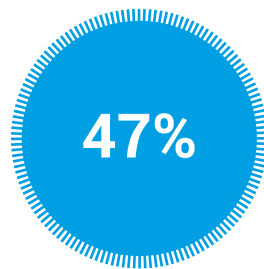


Change careers

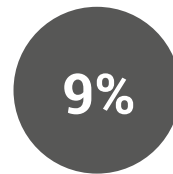


The client's side of the story

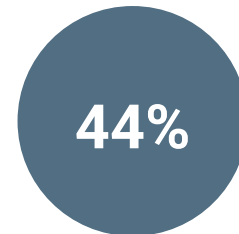
How many of your clients are comfortable judging your copywriting work?



Most
are comfortable
judging my copy



Few
are comfortable
judging my copy



Some
are comfortable
judging my copy

	2017
Some	47%
Most	44%
Few	10%

(no data for 2016)

What are the most common problems with briefs you receive?

■ 2018
■ 2017

(no data for 2016)

Lacking basic information



Insufficient guidance on tone and voice



Little information on target audience



Limited access to subject experts



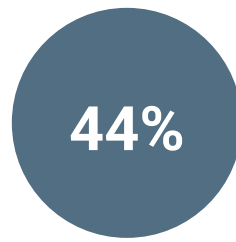
No information about intended outcome



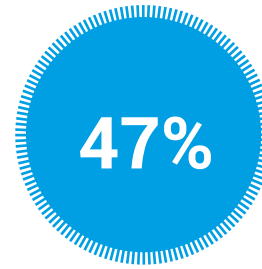
Few details about eventual use



How many of your clients would benefit from advice on commissioning copy?



Some of my clients would benefit



Most of my clients would benefit

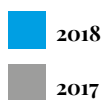


Few of my clients would benefit

	2017
Some	47%
Most	44%
Few	10%

(no data for 2016)

What are the biggest challenges you face when working with clients?



(no data for 2016)

Copy by committee



Lack of confidence or experience in judging written work



Lack of time



Unrealistic expectations



Lack of understanding of writing process



Poor brief or source materials



Copywriting is...

Our respondents describe copywriting in their own words.



About this survey

Aim

Our goal is to develop a better understanding of the copywriting profession, and share this knowledge with our peers and fellow professionals.

Questions

Each year we build on the 2016 survey composed by Joanna Tidball with support from Tom Albrighton.

Analysis and reporting

We take the data from SurveyMonkey and analyse it using Excel. This report was written by Leif Kendall – with support from Dawn Kofie, Ben Lloyd and Liz Jones. This report was designed by Anna Patience.

Data collection and publicity

The survey was publicly available on Survey Monkey from the end of 2017 to March 2018. The survey was shared via email, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Respondents

We invited all copywriters who serve the UK market to respond (this means overseas copywriters can respond, as long as they work with UK clients).

Anonymity

The survey responses were collected anonymously. This was a deliberate choice to encourage honest reporting of earnings and experiences.

Dataset

420 copywriters responded. In analysing the data, only valid responses were included.

You can use our data

Use this report in any way you like. It's licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. You can use any element of this report, as long as you credit ProCopywriters as the source, and also share your work in the same way.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to our incredible community of copywriters. We're grateful that you gave up your time to complete our survey.

Limitations and disclaimers

This was an open survey, conducted in good faith. We haven't vetted respondents so we cannot rule out distortions or inaccuracies resulting from errors, misinformation or malice.

SurveyMonkey restricts multiple responses from the same IP address, but this can be circumvented.

Our reach is limited to our network and friends of friends – so of course we can't claim to represent the complete copywriter experience. Take this survey as it is – a snapshot of the work, earnings and experiences of 420 copywriters serving the UK market. Don't make any wild decisions based on this survey.

Sponsor this survey

We'd love to talk to more copywriters, more freelancers and more in-house creatives next year. Contact leif@procopywriters.co.uk for more information on sponsorship.



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